

The Marshals

MONITOR



January-February 2005

Deputy marshals pile up arrests

Across the country, deputy marshals prove 'You can run but you can't hide'

All across the country, fugitives know that when the Marshals Service is coming after them, getting arrested is only a matter of time.

Tommy Lee

On Jan. 12, 2005, in Daytona Beach, Fla., the Marshals Service's HIDTA (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area) Fugitive Apprehension Strike Team (FAST) joined forces with the Volusia County (Fla.) Sheriff's Office and the Hernando County (Fla.) Sheriff's Office to nab Tommy Lee.

Lee was one of the most wanted men in Hernando County, having been convicted multiple times since 1987 for selling and possessing cocaine. In November 2004, he was added to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's THUGS Program — Taking Hoodlums Using Guns Seriously — after he allegedly fired a weapon out a car window as he was being chased by deputy sheriffs in Brooksville, Fla.

A \$5,000 reward was offered

for his capture. A week prior to his arrest, he escaped from local officers by fleeing on foot across Florida's Interstate 4. He survived that escapade but caused several car accidents in the process.

The Marshals Service was called in to help in January 2005 and agency investigators soon pinpointed Lee to an apartment complex in Daytona Beach. On the night of the 12th, the FAST and the accompanying officers set up surveillance there.

When Lee got into a car and drove off, Volusia County deputies flattened his tires with nail sticks. Lee then ran into the woods, but he was soon collared after being subdued by a Volusia County police dog.

Brian Johnson

In another foot chase, this time in Dallas, deputy marshals and local police officers assigned to the Dallas/Ft. Worth FAST arrested Brian Johnson on Jan. 10, 2005.

Johnson, with prior arrests for burglary, drug offenses and assault, was wanted for fatally shooting a man five times in the chest on Dec. 26, 2004.

The FAST nabbed him after he jumped out of a moving vehicle.

Ralph Gilpin

On Jan. 8, 2005, in Roanoke, Va., Western Virginia deputy marshals arrested Ralph Gilpin.

Gilpin, 57, has a lengthy criminal record. Federal and state convictions include: armed bank robbery; felony assaults; burglaries; larcenies; escape; drug offenses; and firearms violations.

After Gilpin failed to report to his parole officer in Florida, the Marshals Service was called in to find him.

Deputies tracked the fugitive to Christiansburg, Va. Western Virginia called upon its STAR team — Special Tactics, Arrest and Rescue — and the unit didn't disappoint. Team members captured Gilpin without incident.

Cool under pressure



Inspector John Muffler takes his best shot during the 2004 U.S. National Biathlon Championships in Lake Placid, N.Y. He won silver medals in his two events. [Story, page 12.]

Is there anybody hurt badly down there?

Deputy David Comstock leads rescuers into some tight spots

by David Turner, Public Affairs Office

Childhood nightmares often involve being lost in the woods, but losing your way when hiking or exploring caves — at any age — can be memorable.

Even more unforgettable are the terrifying possibilities that run through parents' minds when they report lost youngsters.

Tragically, lives are lost in every major recreational area of the nation when children or visitors become disoriented or are swept away by sudden storms.

To handle these situations, federal and local governments turn to specially trained volunteers. And one of the nation's most dedicated and accomplished search and rescue experts also happens to be a deputy marshal — David Comstock, a senior criminal investigator in Western Arkansas.

A busy man

Comstock became active in search and rescue efforts in 1992, and he has helped lead a team of volunteers ever since.

He was certified as an instructor by the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR) in 1993 and has trained approximately 1,000 fellow law enforcement officers and volunteers throughout the central United States.

He conducts numerous training classes and exercises each year, at locales such as the Carlsbad Caverns National Park in New Mexico.

In June 2004, Comstock received the NASAR Instructor of the Year Award.

"The award shows he has earned the respect of those who have worked with him," said Western Arkansas Marshal Richard O'Connell.

The majority of Comstock's search and rescue efforts are in and around the Buffalo River National Park, located in the northwest corner of Arkansas. The park encompasses the Buffalo National River — the United States' first national river — and the surrounding valley.

Stretching over 95,000 acres of the Ozark Mountains, the park is crisscrossed by deep stream valleys and even deeper caverns. It attracts nature enthusiasts with its spectacular waterfalls and tall limestone bluffs.

According to the National Park Service, northwestern Arkansas features some of the country's most diverse and challenging wildlife terrains. The region



Deputy Comstock, right of center, and other rescue team members take part in crack-and-crevasse training at an area called Sam's Throne in the Ozark National Forest.

places special demands on search and rescue efforts.

Comstock's team of 60 volunteers is known as the Washington County Search and Rescue Team. Headquartered in Fayetteville, Ark., it is comprised of equestrians and hi-tech com-

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The U.S. Marshals Service — America's Star since 1789.

Director, Marshals Service: Benigno Reyna

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Please e-mail story ideas and photographs to the editor at

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Comstock gets 'em out

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munications experts, as well as swift-water canoeists, canine handlers and several extraordinary trackers.

Of the 40 equestrians on the team, a growing number of them prefer mules to their horses.

"The mules are sure-footed along the steep ravines," Comstock said.

But no matter the mount, he said all of the riders are invaluable.

"They can go farther, longer, and carry more gear than those of us on foot."

When the worst occurs and a dead body needs to be retrieved from an almost impenetrable location, the horses and mules can bring the victim's remains back more easily.

Different than fugitives

Caverns present an immense challenge to Comstock's team. When people become trapped in them, they frequently have slid into an open rock wedge and have broken an arm or leg in the process.

And while these cave explorers — known as spelunkers — are often rescued deep in caverns' depths, most are found on open ground.

Comstock said the tracking skills that law enforcement officers use to find fugitives differ dramatically from methods used to find most missing hikers and spelunkers.

"Unlike fugitives sought by the courts, lost people really want to be found," he said. "The trouble is they keep moving about trying to get their bearings, and that

makes it hard for us to locate them."

In the best of situations, Comstock said, a person who is reported lost by a friend or relative isn't in serious trouble. And sometimes, that person isn't even lost.

Comstock recalls one humorous incident when a massive group of citizens were conducting shoulder-to-shoulder sweeps through a national forest. The person being sought actually joined the rescuers in the search — that is, until he realized that they were looking for *him*.

How often is the team called on for help?

"Over the last six months, we've conducted seven missions and rescued 14 lost people," Comstock said.

Two others individuals, however, were not as fortunate. Both tried to drive their cars across low-water bridges during storms and were drowned.

"In these cases, our dogs often are very helpful," he said. "After

the cars were found downstream with open doors and no bodies inside, the dogs located the people hidden under bramble and bushes along storm-torn shorelines."

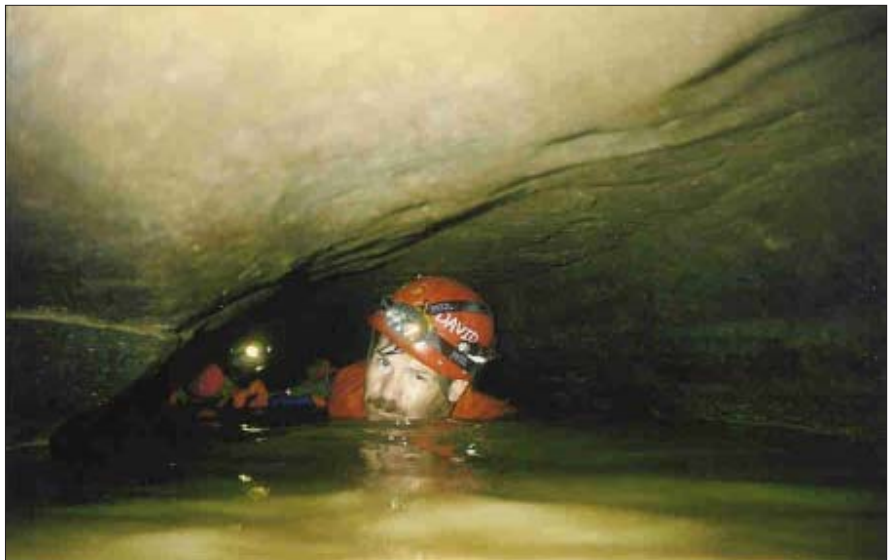
The duties of a search and rescue team member are not always enjoyable.

"Teaching rescuers how to retrieve drowned victims who have been submerged for days is the toughest situation I must address with my students," Comstock said. "Handling these bodies is delicate work and extremely unpleasant."

But the sense of accomplishment that comes with this type of volunteer service is tangible and the rewards are many. For Comstock, the best part of his "second job" is rescuing people in need.

He also enjoys working alongside the many good citizens who volunteer.

"They are great people," he said, noting that his wife Christy is one of them.



Deep in a cave, Deputy David Comstock participates in a training exercise in the Buffalo River National Park in Harrison, Ark. Water temperature was 40 degrees.

'Seeing daylight' at the Cowtown Rodeo

Three districts proudly commemorate USMS' 215th anniversary

Who knew that Jon Bon Jovi came from a "Western" state.

The Districts of New Jersey, Delaware and Eastern Pennsylvania learned so recently, as they sponsored a night at the Cowtown Rodeo, located in Pilesgrove, N.J.

Celebrating the 215th

The District of New Jersey holds a fair amount of prisoners in the Salem County (N.J.) jail, in the southern end of the state. One day, while driving to the jail, Marshal James Plousis took a long look at the Cowtown Rodeo grounds, which can easily be seen from Route 40.

He was struck with an idea.

"I thought it would be good to celebrate our agency's 215th anniversary by sponsoring a 'Marshals Service Night' and focusing on our rich Western heritage," he said.

The marshal shared his idea with Salem County Sheriff John Cooksey. The sheriff, as it turns out, is good friends with the owner of the Cowtown Rodeo, Grant Harris.

Plousis and Harris soon met and discussed a potential plan to link the Marshals Service's anniversary with a night at the rodeo. And the rodeo owner was very receptive to the idea.

"Grant knows a lot about our agency and he appreciates our history," Plousis said. "He couldn't have been any more accommodating, and he really rolled out the red carpet for us."

Plousis then met with Delaware Marshal David Thomas and



Director Reyna is surrounded by his own posse of deputy marshals. From left to right: Roger Bomanblit (Eastern Pennsylvania); Mike Lewandowski (Eastern Pennsylvania); Jack Leo (Delaware); Remigiusz Rubacha (New Jersey); John O'Halloran (New Jersey); and Bill David (Delaware).

Eastern Pennsylvania Marshal Gary Shovlin to plan the event.

"They both were very supportive," Plousis said. "And they helped greatly during the many meetings we had."

A successful night

The Cowtown Rodeo is the largest rodeo on the East Coast. Pilesgrove is located in an area rich in farmland and open fields, but it is only 15 miles from Philadelphia. From May through September, Cowtown holds rodeo competitions every Saturday night in front of large crowds.

Like all other rodeos, Cowtown opens each night's festivities with a grand entry. This is when sponsors, VIPs and contestants with their own horses ride into the ring carrying flags and performing various maneuvers.

Only once before in Cow-

town's history had it allowed an outside entity to lead the grand entry and sponsor an entire night's events. But on Sept. 18, 2004, America's Star was king of the rodeo.

Director Reyna and Marshal Shovlin — both horsemen — led the grand entry and took part in the opening festivities.

"I had never been to a rodeo before, so I didn't know what to expect," Marshal Plousis said. "But it was fun. There was a good deal of color and pageantry, and it was all tastefully done."

In addition to the opening ceremonies, the Marshals Service had a visible presence in other ways as well. There were signs and agency posters placed throughout the rodeo grounds noting the 215th anniversary.

Most notably, deputy marshals from New Jersey, Eastern

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A night at the rodeo

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Pennsylvania and Delaware manned Marshals Service tabletop displays. These deputies fielded questions from the many rodeo patrons that stopped by, and they handed out hundreds of agency publications.

“The people really appreciated having us there,” Marshal Plousis

said. “The feedback from everyone was super, and we raised the public’s awareness of our agency.”

Approximately 100 Marshals Service employees attended, including Eastern New York Marshal Eugene Corcoran and Southern New York Marshal Joseph Guccione.

The Marshals Service’s partici-

pation in the rodeo was highlighted in the local newspaper the following day, and a subsequent edition featured an in-depth story on the agency’s unique role in the federal judicial system.

“This really was a home run for the Marshals Service,” Plousis said. “It was a proud event, and it was a great way to kick off our anniversary.”



Director Reyna sits atop his horse just prior to the grand entry.



This was the first rodeo for New Jersey Marshal James Plousis, right, and he was impressed. He was also grateful for the hospitality shown to the agency by Cowtown owner Grant Harris, left.



Director Reyna, Eastern Pennsylvania Marshal Gary Shovlin (left) and Cowtown Rodeo owner Grant Harris initiate the competition.



The director showed his Texas roots by wearing his cowboy hat as he enjoyed the night’s events with his wife Maria.



The rodeo was co-sponsored and supported by New Jersey, Delaware and Eastern Pennsylvania.

The Marshals Service remembers ...

Ralph Boling

Former Western Kentucky Marshal Ralph Boling, 76, died Sept. 27, 2004. He served as marshal from 1981-93. Early on, he served in the U.S. Army from 1946-47. He worked as an auctioneer, oil well driller and road foreman — and later as the water superintendent for Hawesville, Ky. He was elected to two terms as the Hancock County (Ky.) sheriff, from 1970-74 and 1978-81, before joining the Marshals Service. After leaving the agency, he served as the Hancock County judge-executive from 1994-98. He is survived by his wife Dortha, a son and a daughter. “Ralph was a true friend and a very good marshal,” said Western Kentucky Supervisory Deputy George Walsh. “It’s a shame the cancer got to him.”

Ozelle Brown

Retired Northern Alabama Supervisory Deputy Ozelle Brown died Oct. 4, 2004, after a long battle with cancer. He began his Marshals Service career as a deputy marshal in 1970. He then became the supervisory deputy in the Huntsville sub-office when it opened in 1976. He retired from the agency in 1993, subsequently working as a patrol deputy at the Madison County (Ala.) Jail and later as the chief jailer for the Jackson County (Ala.) Sheriff’s Office. He is survived by his

wife Becky, two sons and a daughter.

Wallace Camp

Wallace Camp, 74, died April 19, 2004, at his home after a lengthy illness. Prior to his law enforcement career, he served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1946-48. He later served as a deputy sheriff in Floyd County (Ga.) before joining the Marshals Service as a deputy marshal. All of his 21 years with the agency were spent in Northern Georgia. He is survived by his daughter Teresa.

Eloise Cullen

Eloise Cullen, 101, died Aug. 7, 2004, in Savannah, Ga. A part of agency history, she was one of first women to become a chief deputy in the Marshals Service. She spent her entire career in Southern Georgia.

Glenn Cunningham

Former New Jersey Marshal Glenn Cunningham, 60, died May 25, 2004, after suffering a heart attack. He was a man of firsts, becoming the first black U.S. marshal for New Jersey and later the first black mayor of Jersey City — New Jersey’s second largest city. To honor him, Jersey City declared the day of his death a citywide day of mourning. Cunningham served as marshal from 1996-2000, yet his stature in his home



Former Marshal Glenn Cunningham

state went far beyond the realm of federal law enforcement. He served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps beginning in 1961. He subsequently joined the Jersey City Police Department, where he remained on the force for 25 years and rose in rank to captain. He retired in 1991 and was named as Hudson County’s director of public safety. Next, he was nominated by President Clinton and confirmed as New Jersey’s marshal in 1996. At the time of his death, he was serving both as Jersey City’s mayor and as a state senator. “With Glenn, people knew he was just going to do the right thing by them,” said Jersey City Police Director Sam Jefferson. Added New Jersey Senate Minority Leader Leonard Lance, “Glenn Cunningham was an exceptional leader who fought tirelessly for the people.” Nearly 4,000 people attended

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The Marshals Service remembers

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the funeral service, which was held at the Jersey City Armory. During the service, Pastor George Maize III of the Metropolitan A.M.E. Zion Church said, "He became a servant of the people. His faith was strong and he lived up to his commitments." U.S. Attorney Christopher Christie also spoke. He drew an ovation from the audience when he said, "All too often, the people who come forward to serve us disappoint us. But the people of Jersey City can say, 'Not us. We have Glenn Cunningham.'" Cunningham is survived by his wife Sandra.

Daniel Donovan

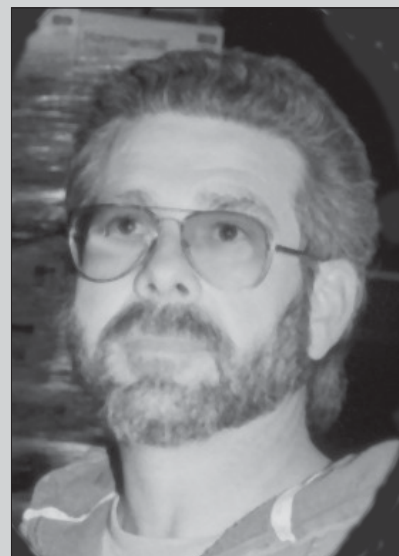
Daniel Donovan, 91, died July 15, 2004. He was appointed as the U.S. marshal for Eastern Washington in 1962 and later transferred to Western Washington as a deputy marshal. After retiring from the Marshals Service, he served as a bailiff in Snohomish County (Wash.) Superior Court. Prior to coming to the Marshals Service, his life experiences were quite varied. In his school years, he ferried cows to be auctioned, trapped pigeons in boxcars to make pigeon pie during the Depression, played quarterback in high school and college and even rode the rails with \$12 in his pocket to attend the Chicago World's Fair in 1933.

He later worked construction on the Diablo Dam, drove a taxicab, built his family home, loaded ammunition ships, worked for a moving company and became a partner in a beer distributorship. He was elected to the state legislature in 1946 and subsequently became a key member of the local Democratic Party. He is survived by two daughters and a son.

David Hall

Retired District of Columbia Deputy Marshal David Hall died of colon cancer Nov. 19, 2004, at Fauquier Hospital in Warrenton, Va. He was 73. A fourth-generation Washingtonian, he grew up in the Maryland suburbs. He served in the U.S. Army for three years, stationed in Germany during the Korean War. In 1958, he became a Maryland state trooper. Two years later, he became a deputy marshal. He was among the deputies who helped enforce school desegregation in the South in the 1960s. In 1966, his career led him to the Office of Naval Intelligence and then the Naval Security Group. He retired in 1989. He enjoyed woodworking and making clocks. He also played the autoharp and guitar in a small gospel and bluegrass band, performing in nursing homes and

churches. He is survived by his wife Esther and a daughter.



Former printer Mike Kelly

Mike Kelly

Mike Kelly, of Pocomoke City, Md., died May 15, 2004, at the Peninsula Regional Medical Center in Salisbury, Md., after suffering a heart attack. He was 51. He worked in the Department of Justice printing shop prior to coming to the Marshals Service. Under the direction of Larry Moga-vero, Kelly — along with Bob Frohlich and Charles Washington — formed the original Publications Management Branch at Marshals Service headquarters. Kelly organized the mail distribution system that is still being used within the agency today, and he later initiated the reorganization of the Marshals Service ware-

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house. In 1996, he retired on disability after suffering a massive heart attack. In recent years, he moved back to his childhood home in Pocomoke City. He kept himself busy by, among other things, working hard as a Boy Scouts volunteer. He is survived by his second wife Peggy, a son, a stepson and two stepdaughters. "If you worked at headquarters in the early 90s, you probably knew Mike Kelly," Mogavero said. "He was the friendly, bespectacled chain smoker with an ever-present smile and a large cup of black coffee. He had special talent for getting to the heart of a problem, and he would always keep cool with the phone ringing constantly. We miss you, Mike."

Emory Laskin

Former Deputy Marshal Emory Laskin, 53, died June 19, 2004, of an acute intracranial hemorrhage at Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia. Prior to coming to the Marshals Service, he served as a technical sergeant in the U.S. Air Force. He served in Vietnam and Thailand and later retired from the Air Force Reserve in 1984. He was a deputy from 1981-88. After leaving the agency, he worked as a truck driver for two disposal companies. He is survived by his wife Tracy and a son.

Hugh McDonald

Hugh McDonald, 76, died at his home in Manassas, Va., on Sept. 14, 2004. He helped implement the Marshals Service's Witness Security Program in 1971. He became the program's first inspector, and he served as a liaison between the Marshals Service and the Justice Department's Organized Crime Division. He retired from the agency in 1982 after 24 years of service. He is survived by his wife Thelma and two daughters.

Phil Prindle

Southern California Supervisory Deputy Phil Prindle, 49, died May 14, 2004, after a two-and-a-half-year battle with cancer. He was receiving hospice care at home at the time of his death. He joined the Marshals Service as a deputy marshal in 1988 and subsequently played a major role in the agency's Asset Forfeiture Program. He managed his district's GOCO (government owned/contractor operated) facility, which was the first — and is still the largest — seized vehicle operation in the United States. "He was a devoted husband and father, a generous friend and a true law enforcement professional," stated Director Reyna. Added Jim Herzog, Asset Forfeiture Program manager, "At 6'8", Phil was a gentle giant — not only in terms of his physical stature but also in terms of his personality and what he held in his heart for

his fellow workers and his family." Prindle is survived by his wife Katie, two sons and two daughters. [Additional story, page 10.]

Christian Rice

Christian Rice, the agency's first public affairs officer, died April 26, 2004, in Arlington, Va. He served as a PAO from 1973-76, under Director Wayne Colburn. His federal government career ended when he retired from the Environmental Protection Agency in 1999. Prior to his civil service career, he was an infantry platoon leader [first lieutenant] in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division during the Vietnam War. He was awarded the Silver Star for heroism in ground combat. He subsequently served in the U.S. Army Reserve. He is survived by two sons and two daughters.

Jack Roe

Former Northern Iowa Marshal Jack Roe died Sept. 18, 2004, in Hot Springs, Ark., after an extended illness. Roe, 74, was a Sioux City (Iowa) police officer from 1956 until joining the Marshals Service in 1965 as a deputy marshal. He was appointed as U.S. marshal and served in that capacity from 1977-81, after which he finished his career as a deputy in Southern California

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The Marshals Service remembers

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until his retirement in 1984. Prior to his positions in law enforcement, he served in the U.S. Navy for four years. He is survived by his wife Georgia, six daughters and a son. Western Tennessee Chief Deputy Tommy Thompson marked Roe's death by remembering him as a mentor. Thompson was beginning his Marshals Service career in San Diego as Roe was ending his career. "Jack took me under his wing," Thompson said recently. "He gave me rides to work, regaled me with stories and offered me much-needed advice about what to expect in my career as a deputy. Jack was a great deal of fun to be around and taught me a great deal in the few months we worked together. Jack served his country and the Marshals Service well. Rest in peace, my friend."



Former Marshal Jack Roe

Cobb Vaughan

Former Eastern California Deputy Cobb Vaughan, 82, died June 10, 2004, in Elk Grove, Calif. Prior to coming to the Marshals Service, he served in the U.S. Army in the South Pacific during World War II. He was awarded the Bronze Star. After his military service, he began a career in law enforcement with the Oakland (Calif.) Police Department, where he served as an officer for 14 years. He later became a deputy marshal, working out of Eastern California from 1970-90. Vaughan also owned two dairies. He is survived by his wife Roberta, two sons and two daughters.

William Walkup Sr.

Retired District of Columbia Deputy Marshal Billy Walkup, 65, died Sept. 21, 2004. He entered the military after graduating from high school, serving four years in the U.S. Air Force. A native Washingtonian, he began his law enforcement career with a 7-year stint as an officer with the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department. From there, he came to the Marshals Service, serving as a deputy in the District of Columbia from 1968-88. Upon retirement, he worked as a court security officer in the National Courts Building in Washington. He had a great sense of humor and was passionate about football and basketball. He especially

enjoyed spending time with his children and grandchildren. He is survived by his wife Sylvia, one son and three daughters.

John Williams

Former Western Tennessee Marshal John Williams died May 28, 2004, of heart failure at his home in Germantown, Tenn. At 92, he was one of the oldest living U.S. marshals, and he was a close, personal friend and distant relative to current Western Tennessee Marshal David Jolley. Williams was a true politico, and very much at the heart of things in his region. Although he was elected to public office only once in his life, he was a mentor and advisor to many local Republican politicians. It is said that he remade and unified the Republican party statewide. His grandson Taylor Williams said, "Everybody wanted to sit and chat with him, and everybody wanted to listen to him talk." He was appointed as marshal by President Eisenhower in 1955, and he continued in that position until 1960. He is survived by his son Richard.

Note: To ensure coverage in the Monitor, please e-mail dave.sacks@usdoj.gov when a current or former employee dies in your district or division. If there is a newspaper obituary available, please fax it to (202) 307-8729 [attn: Sacks].

Big Phil gets his name on a very big facility

Memory of former S/CA supervisor lives on as GOCO operation is renamed

As a tribute to Phil Prindle's legacy of hard work and success in Southern California, his name now graces the progressive facility in which he made such an impact.

The Philip A. Prindle GOCO Facility continues to house seized vehicles at great cost savings to the taxpayers, and it will stand as a symbol of one man's stalwart dedication to his job.

A brief history

Southern California is responsible for 40 percent of all vehicle seizures in the United States, largely the result of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents seizing cars along the Mexican border. Agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Administration also confiscate vehicles during narcotics and other criminal investigations.

The GOCO (government owned/contractor operated) facility, located in San Diego County just outside of Mexico, is the depository of these vehicles. It is the largest seized vehicle operation in the country, comprised of outdoor and indoor facilities.

The outdoor area covers 31 acres and includes a 4,000-square-foot office building, massive disposal lot, receiving/staging area and a parking lot for visitors. Here, salvage/scrap vehicles and mid-valued vehicles are stored and auctioned.

The indoor facility, a half-mile away, is comprised of a 60,000-square-foot storage area for high-end vehicles as well as 1,500 feet of office space.

This indoor facility, called the Tunnel Building, is actually a warehouse built atop a tunnel previously



Phil Prindle stood 6'8", but his impact on his agency stretched even further.

used to smuggle aliens and drugs from Mexico into the United States. It was seized in 1993 and turned over to the Marshals Service.

Jim Herzog, Asset Forfeiture Office program manager, came up with the idea to create the GOCO facility out of the seized property, and after some major renovations to the warehouse, that idea became a reality in 1998.

Prior to that, the Marshals Service

had to pay sizeable fees to store vehicles that came into its custody after being seized.

It was Southern California Supervisory Deputy Phil Prindle who was placed in charge of the entire GOCO operation from its inception until his death in May 2004 at the age of 49.

Known affectionately as the gentle giant of the Marshals Service, Prindle was a pillar of the agency's Asset Forfeiture Program. And he took great pains to ensure that the GOCO endeavor ran smoothly.

"He was the heart and soul behind the facility," said Southern California Assistant Chief Deputy Steve Stafford.

Added Asset Forfeiture Office Chief Kathy Deoudes: "While many were involved in the 'bricks and mortar' of the GOCO project, it was Phil's leadership and management skills that made this operation so successful. Most importantly, it was his ability to build strong working relationships with the U.S. Attorney's Office, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Border Patrol and the General Services Administration (GSA) that made the Southern California vehicle program the flagship of the Marshals Service Asset Forfeiture Program."

Prindle and his district colleagues enacted a host of innovations at the facility that made the operation an efficiently-run, cost-saving triumph for the federal government. The sheer volume of vehicles demanded nothing less.

"We were dealing with massive amounts of cars," Stafford said. "Sometimes the facility had up to 6,000 cars in it."

Prindle coordinated various types

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GOCO facility honors Big Phil

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of vehicle sales to prevent the storage facilities from becoming overcrowded. He supervised monthly auctions which regularly grossed \$800,000 per auction.

Through his positive working relationships with the various seizing agencies in Southern California, the Marshals Service was able to reap the benefits — including monthly visits by CBP agents whose drug-sniffing dogs would check the vehicles for possible contraband.

He also coordinated sealed bid sales of vehicles valued below \$500 with local salvage/scrap dealers.

“Since these vehicles were not permitted to be re-titled, these sales were instrumental in removing vehicles from California highways that had safety concerns,” Deoudes said.

A fitting tribute

When Prindle died, there was a consensus within Southern California and the Asset Forfeiture Office at headquarters to pay tribute to him.

Behind the impetus of Deoudes, Herzog and property management specialist Pat Keefe, the Marshals Service soon put a plaque upon the Tunnel Building in his memory.

Getting the larger outdoor facility named for Prindle, however, was a more extensive undertaking — and it required a lot more patience and persistence. This is because, two months prior, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had taken over the lease of the large office building adjacent to the lots.

“Homeland Security became the controlling entity, so we needed the approval of people outside of the Marshals Service,” Stafford said.

This complicated matters, but it

didn’t deter Stafford. For nearly six months, he attended meetings and made dozens of phone calls to try to pull everything together.

In the end, Southern California obtained the necessary approval from GSA, DHS and the Imperial Industrial Group — a corporation which owned the structure and leased it to DHS.

“Many thanks go to Steve for his hard work as the Marshals Service negotiator, broker and facilitator to make this happen,” Herzog said.

Forty people attended the dedication celebration on Nov. 10, 2004, including Prindle’s family, friends and former coworkers.

America’s Star lost one of its shining stars when Prindle died, but a strong bond remains.

“Our friend Big Phil is looking down and smiling on us,” Herzog said.

And what he sees is an indelible mark he left on a grateful agency.

“He was probably one of the nicest guys any of us will ever meet,” Stafford said.

“Big Phil was a perfect example to others ... of how an individual should perform his or her duties as a government official,” Deoudes added. “His positive attitude, his honesty and his never-ending dedication to the Asset Forfeiture Program will be sorely missed.”

Daughter Jessica cuts the cake as wife Katie looks on during the November 2004 dedication ceremony in which the nation’s first-ever GOCO facility was named in honor of Phil Prindle.



Pictured left to right are: Southern California Assistant Chief Deputy Steve Stafford; Emily Prindle [daughter]; Jessica Prindle [daughter]; Katie Prindle [wife]; Wes Prindle [son]; Southern California Marshal David Bejarano; Ricardo Scheller, DHS; Peter Watson, GSA; and John Norris, Imperial Industrial Group.

Health obstacles no match for JSD inspector

John Muffler brings home two silver medals from Lake Placid nationals

by Mavis DeZulovich, Public Affairs Office

The words of Abraham Lincoln, “Your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other thing,” may be especially meaningful for Senior Inspector John Muffler, Judicial Security Division.

In August 2004, he won two silver medals in the 2004 U.S. National Biathlon Championships in Lake Placid, N.Y. But, in order to make it to the competition, Muffler had to overcome a couple of major medical obstacles.

Two years ago, he was diagnosed with hemochromatosis, a genetic disorder resulting in an abnormally high iron count in his body. Chronic fatigue is a typical symptom associated with the condition, and there also exists the potential for organ failure.

Hemochromatosis is hereditary. Although Muffler was not feeling overly fatigued, he took his sister Susan’s advice and got tested after she was diagnosed with the same condition.

His results showed an iron count 18 times higher than the normal limit. For the next year and a half, he underwent monthly bloodletting.

“I am a bit phobic about needles,” Muffler said, “so the monthly bloodletting was probably the worst part of the treatment.”

While being treated for his disorder, doctors also discovered that a benign brain tumor had caused his testosterone level to plummet.

He found some wry humor in the manner in which he was told of the tumor’s discovery.

“When the doctor was explaining about the brain tumor, he said that about 10 percent of all cadavers had the same type. I had to laugh at that rather strange way of putting it into perspective — even if [the tumor] was benign.”

Neither of the conditions was considered life threatening, but their diagnoses and treatments did make it difficult for Muffler to keep focused on preparing for a national competition. Although he stays in good physical condition to perform his law enforcement duties, his health issues proved to be major challenges.

Never one to give up, Muffler pressed on with the rigorous training required for the summer biathlon — which combines running and target shooting.

Bolstered by modern medicine and encouraged by his family and coworkers, he forged on with a “can do” attitude and a strong desire to succeed.

“I wasn’t in danger of dying or anything,” said Muffler, who is assigned to Eastern Pennsylvania. “But if not for the medical

treatment and support of my family and friends ... no way could I compete or dream of showing up for a national competition.”

His courage and determination paid off in a big way in Lake Placid, on the same course used for the winter biathlon — skiing and shooting — during the 1980 Olympic Games. He won a silver medal in the 4K sprint, which involves five standing shots and five shots from a prone position. He also won a silver medal in the 6K match pursuit, which entails two rounds of five standing shots and two rounds of five prone shots. The shooting distance for both disciplines was 50 meters.

Muffler still must undergo quarterly bloodletting, but his road to a full recovery is getting shorter with each new day. And if he ever gets tired of the journey, he needs only to look at those two shiny silver medals to motivate him once again.

His athletic achievements, coupled with the physical challenges he overcame, show the mark of a true champion.



JSD Inspector John Muffler overcame serious health challenges on his way to succeeding at the 2004 National Biathlon Championships in Lake Placid, N.Y.